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Testimony for SB 1054 An Act Concerning Students with Dyslexia

Testimony From:

Betty Granata

44 Chestnut Hill Road

Norwalk CT

I support the SB 1054 An Act Concerning Students with Dyslexia. However, more needs to be done to strengthen this Bill to make it more effective. I am the parent of two dyslexic children, who were never identified by their school system with dyslexia, but only speech and communications as a primary diagnosis. Their special education teacher was never trained in any scientific-researched based reading program. What that meant for our family is both my boys received services that ultimately never resulted in them learning to read at the public school. It wasn't until we had them independently identified through private neuropsych exam that we were able to understand what was required in order to teach them to read. Ultimately, we had to look outside our school system for a researched-based reading program. Never having the label means never having a plan in place to address it. Although the earlier legislation has been a step in the right direction, more needs to be done. Because simply putting a label on the problem, without giving teachers the tools or professional training they need to help students is not a complete solution.

The SDE needs to enforce **mandatory** professional development in research-based reading instruction for all untrained SPED teachers *currently* teaching reading. They should be trained to instruct students in at least one research based program. Preferably more than one (because one size does not fit all) or ideally have different teachers in district trained in different programs. I think you would be surprised how many SPED teachers who are charged with teaching reading that have no or little training to do so. I know this was the case with my children.

I wish the Dyslexia Bill was a cleaner Bill solely focused on these students with great challenges learning to read. With all the other things required of teachers to teach in this Bill it's not surprising how challenging it is to find the time to teach reading. Literacy is the most important skill the schools will ever teach. It should be the number one priority of our educational system in Connecticut and in this country. Being illiterate severely diminishes a student's long term success in school and in life. Students with Dyslexia are some of the most creative and brightest students in school who are misunderstood because they learn differently.

My motivation in testifying is to help illustrate the need for a more comprehensive Dyslexia Bill so we can rely on our schools to enforce the most basic of our civil rights...to learn to read is the right to a free education.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Betty Granata